

After a few moments, Mr. Campbell took Rushton into his own study, and Donaldson followed them. Howard was the first to break the silence that ensued.

'Who would have thought it?' said he, with a sigh. 'Poor Rushton! how much he must have suffered!'

'I had almost said, it serves him right,' exclaimed Doyle; 'only one cannot help pitying him now that he is so ill, and sorry for what he has done.'

'I hope that Donaldson will not be punished,' observed one of the boys.

'So do I,' said Herbert; 'and there was something in the expression of Mr. Campbell's face which makes me think that his punishment will not be very great.'

'It shows that Rushton was truly penitent, or he would not have come back again,' observed Howard.

Frank proposed that they should all agree, upon their return to school, never in any way to allude to the affair of the peaches before Rushton or Donaldson, to which his companions readily assented.

Rushton did not return to the school-room. Frank could not help watching him as he was again lifted into the carriage. Just as it was driving away, Rushton looked up, and perceiving him, nodded and smiled as he had not smiled before for many weeks.

Donaldson also departed without bidding his school-fellows farewell. He needed not have been afraid of meeting them, for they were all prepared, as he afterwards found, to think kindly of him.

Hamilton was the next to leave. Frank and he promised to write to each other. They were real friends now. Never had Frank felt so happy; he would have liked to make friends with the whole world. Philip Doyle could not understand it; but he was pleased to see him so well and cheerful. Frank promised that he would try and gain a prize next year for his sake.

The cousins had a pleasant journey back again to the dear home, and had also the satisfaction of finding all well when they got there. Little Helen was too delighted at seeing them to think of anything else. And Frank's bright animated countenance pleased his father better than if he had brought home many prizes.

'I never saw a boy so altered in my life,' exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer. 'Why, he is half a head taller at least, and has almost as much color as my Frederick.'

Mr. Netherton did not reply. His thin

hands were folded together, and his eyes meekly raised to the Giver of all good.

It was not long before Frederick told them the story of the peaches; and how well Frank had behaved in keeping Howard's secret; while Helen listened with the tears in her eyes. And then Frank added how his cousin had stood his friend throughout, in good report and evil report, and what a comfort it had been to him; upon which his mother and sister kissed Frederick fondly, while Mr. Netherton thanked him for his kindness to his dear boy. Frederick never forgot that day, nor the impression it made upon him; and from that time Frank always found a firm friend and supporter in his cousin.

Claude Hamilton kept his promise of writing to Frank; and a regular correspondence commenced between them, which was continued, whenever they were separated, as long as they lived.

Mr. Netherton congratulated his son upon having found, or rather made, such a friend. But he forbore to add, that he hoped he would be a comfort to him when he himself should be no more. He could not bear to throw a shadow over the bright future which Frank anticipated when Hamilton should be able to come and stay with them at the Grange.

Just before the holidays terminated, Frank received a letter from Rushton, in which he told him that he should not be permitted to return to school, but was going abroad with his parents. 'My foot,' he wrote, 'is still painful; it is thought that I may feel the effects of it a long while. I hope I shall—I do not mean the pain, but the recollections which it brings with it. O Frank! I shall never forget your kindness to me, when I deserved nothing but reproaches. There are other things, too, which I hope never to forget as long as I live. I read the Bible every morning and evening, as I promised you I would. My mother has given me one just like yours. She smiled when I told her about the talisman, and said that it was a good name for it. If I had attended to its warnings before, it would have kept me from doing what I did. Remember me to Howard, and tell him to continue to persevere. And also to Donaldson, and as many of the others as ask after or care for me, and they are few indeed. But I have deserved that it should be so.'

Frank showed the letter to his father; but he did not tell even that dear parent all that he knew about, all that he had done, all that he hoped for Rushton. It was one of those innocent secrets which we are the happier for keep-

ing locked up in our own hearts. But the language of those hearts must ever be, 'Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory.'

'Well, Frank,' said Mr. Netherton to his son, as they sat together the last day of his holidays, the boy in his own place upon the little stool at his feet; 'and do you still desire as much as ever to be a missionary?'

'It is my one wish,' replied Frank.

'Then be it so,' said his father. 'God's will be done.'

'My dear papa,' continued the boy, who guessed the struggle was going on in the heart of that affectionate parent, 'I will never leave you.'

'No, my dear child, never while I live.'

'I will be a home missionary,' said Frank.

'I thought that you were so anxious to visit foreign countries,' added Mr. Netherton, after a pause; during which he had succeeded in controlling his almost overpowering emotion.

'Yes, I am afraid I have thought of that more than I ought,' said Frank. 'I half envied Rushton when I received his letter, to think that he was going abroad. But then his parents will be with him. You are not strong enough to travel, and I do not want to go anywhere without you.'

'You must learn to do without me some day,' Frank.

The boy answered only by pressing closer to him.

'God knows how soon,' continued Mr. Netherton. 'Let us try and say, His will be done.'

'It is a hard lesson,' replied Frank weeping. 'We will learn it by degrees, my child.'

'You are not worse, dear papa, are you?' asked Frank, looking anxiously into his pale face.

'No; I am better.'

'Then why do you talk thus?'

'I know not. But you will not forget what I have said?'

'No,' replied Frank, smiling through his tears, 'I shall not easily forget it. I was afraid that you were ill.'

Mr. Netherton sighed; but a few moments afterwards he smiled also, in order to cheer and comfort the still anxious boy. 'God will comfort him,' thought he, 'when I am gone.'

## CHAPTER XXV.

THE END.

It is not our intention to dwell any longer upon the school days of Frank Netherton.